

# Examining the Role of Public-Private Partnerships in K-12 Career Readiness

by

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## Executive Summary:

The US and global economy is rapidly changing, but the education sector has not kept up with the innovation and academic rigor needed in order to compete with our economic peers. Currently, only 7 percent of US students reached the advanced level in eighth-grade math, while 48 percent of eighth graders in Singapore and 47 percent of eighth graders in South Korea reached the advanced level. “As those with superior math and science skills increasingly thrive in a global economy, the lag among American students could be a cause for

concern.” (Rich, 2012) Additionally, the U.S.’s approach to preparing young people for the lower-skill but in-demand jobs in a technology-driven economy lags, as evidenced by a 58.4 percent labor force participation rate and a 7.1 percent unemployment rate for high school graduates ages 25+ with no college education.

<sup>1</sup> This totals approximately 2.5 million Americans (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014),

and when considering all unemployed citizens ages 25+, the number rises to 10.5 million. The challenge considered in this paper is that there are roughly 4 million job openings in the US, and it is likely that only 3.3 percent will be filled this month. (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014)

This hourglass-shaped challenge is often called the “Skills Gap,” which is the difference in the skills required on the job and the actual skills possessed by the employees. To put it more simply, there are Americans who are seeking jobs, but they are not deemed qualified for the jobs available. There is a

### Central Question – Masters Proposal

***Is there a skills gap in the U.S. work force? If so, what role does K-12 education play in solving the problem, and can public-private partnerships support their effort while truly benefitting students?***

- *How do different sectors define the skills gap?*
- *What can we learn from available K-12 College and Career Readiness frameworks and curricula?*
- *Is Career Readiness really being addressed in these frameworks?*
- *What are the strategies to measure the impact of K-12 public-private partnerships?*

<sup>1</sup> For those with a Bachelor’s degree or higher, the participation rate is 75.6% , and the unemployment rate is 3.4%, as of the February 2014 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.